



# Thriving Through Trauma

**Week 7: Creating Meaning**

Presented by CSUEB Counseling Services

# Creating Meaning Exercise

What do you see?



## A Few Zoom Guidelines

- Please mute your audio and type any questions into the chat box
- Your video can be off or on, whatever makes you most comfortable
- Confidentiality and Zoom limitations

## Community Agreements

- Speak to your own experience
- Share headlines, not details
- Step forward, step back
- Ask others before giving them feedback
- Assume positive intent from others
- Take responsibility for your needs
- Commit to all weeks of group
- Any suggestions?



# Weekly Check-In

Name, preferred pronouns, major, fun fact. **REVIEW: Asking for Help**

**How are you (*weather analogy*)? What safe vibing skill did you use this week?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ask for Help                | <input type="checkbox"/> Create a new story |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cry                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Structure your day |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choose self respect         | <input type="checkbox"/> Trust the process  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take good care of your body | <input type="checkbox"/> Reframe setbacks   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compassion                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on now       |



A background image featuring several pink roses in various stages of bloom, set against a dark, moody background. The roses are the central focus, with their petals showing soft pink and white tones. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the petals and the green of the leaves.

## Quote of the Day

“The one thing you can’t take away from me is the way I choose to respond to what you do to me. The last of one’s freedoms is to choose one’s attitude in any given circumstance.”

- Viktor E. Frankl (*Austrian psychiatrist & Holocaust survivor*)



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# Twisted Meanings

What it looks like in emotions,  
thoughts, and actions

# Key Points

- Part of human nature is to create meaning from life experiences. We are always actively interpreting and responding to the world.
- It is important to choose to create meanings that help you become more safe, helping in our healing.
- If you grow up with difficult childhood or traumas, we can develop meanings that harm. Eg. “no one can be trusted”
- Meanings can be at a very deep level, which may be unconscious for long time.
- Goal is to remain open to new possibilities.

A hand is holding a crystal ball. Inside the crystal ball, a scene of a stadium is visible, with a large crowd of people and a green field. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery.

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# Reframing Twisted Meanings

Examples of reframing *Twisted Meanings* in emotions, thoughts, and actions



# Creating Meaning: **Reframed Twisted Meaning**

We will read through the meanings that harm and practice alternative meanings that heal on the next few slides.

**Instructions:** Note in your mind or on a sheet of paper/your phone which meanings you have used in the past and notice any reactions and feelings to both the harmful and healing meanings

- **Put a star next to those you particularly **struggle with****

# Examples of Twisted Meanings: **Emotions**

## Examples That Harm

- **Pathologizing yourself** - “I’m crazy - I shouldn’t feel this way”
- **Ignoring cues** - “If I ignore this toothache, it will go away.”
- **Over-identifying with traumatic experiences** - “My life is pain. I am my trauma”

## Alternatives That Heal

- **Honor your feelings** - you are not crazy. Your feelings make sense in light of what you have been through
- **Attend to your needs** - listen, notice, believe yourself
- **Cultivate a broad identity** - You are more than your experiences or what you suffered. Think about your broad identity

# Examples of Twisted Meanings: **Thoughts**

## Examples That Harm

- **Beating yourself up** - “My family is right, I’m worthless!”
- **Focusing on the negative** - “I can’t do anything right.”
- **The past is in the present** - “I’m trapped repeating the same mistakes.”
- **Mind Reading** - “He didn’t say hi because he hates me.”
- **Unsafe coping thoughts** - “I need a drink to relax.”

## Alternatives That Heal

- **Love, not hate, creates change** - care and understanding promote real change
- **Notice the good** - what went right? What is good about you?
- **Stay in the present** - Remember that you have choices and power
- **Check out your assumptions** - reality testing; ask the person
- **Seek safety** - acknowledge your urges and feelings; find a safe way to cope

The background is a blurred photograph of a desk. A silver pen is visible in the lower right foreground, and a keyboard is visible in the background. The overall tone is warm and professional.

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# Discussion

# Discussion

1. What was it like for you to go through the list of harmful and healing meanings?
2. Share one meaning that stood out to you – How did you relate to it?
3. When you are stuck in a harmful meaning, how could you remind yourself of a healing meaning?





# Reflect & Debrief





## Reflect & Debrief

### Reflect/ Debrief

Any thoughts? Questions?  
Reflections? Reactions?

### Check Out Question

**1 new meaning** or **1 thing** you  
are committing to practicing  
from group this week

# Additional Resources

- **Mental Health apps:** Wysa, Clarity (CBT), Mindshift, MoodTools, Calm, Shine, Happify, Headspace, Days since, IAmSober, Worry Watch, PTSD Coach, DBT Coach
- **Counseling groups** throughout every week
- **Pioneers for HOPE** - support with food and housing @pioneersforhope
- Follow us on **Instagram** - @eastbayshcs
- **Downloadable slides and group handouts**





A close-up photograph of a white and yellow plumeria flower resting on a sandy beach. The flower is positioned next to a piece of weathered driftwood. The background is a soft-focus view of the ocean waves breaking on the shore. The text "Next Week: Creating Meaning Pt. 2" is overlaid on the image in a white and orange font.

# **Next Week:** **Creating Meaning Pt. 2**



# Thanks for Joining!

**See you next week!**

With appreciation to the Allies Program (Sacramento, CA) for formatting this Safe Coping List. © Guilford Press, New York. From: Najavits, L.M. *Seeking Safety: A Treatment Manual for PTSD and Substance Abuse* (2002). Only for personal use with clients.